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ABSTRACT

Two common perspectives regarding lower-class behavior are examined. The authors find little empirical support either for the "culture of poverty" position, with its singular emphasis on retained and transmitted cultural modes, or for the "blocked opportunity" or "situational" hypothesis. Recent evidence is adduced which shows a 3rd perspective, adaptive drift, to be the most adequate conceptualization. In this perspective, the poor are able to drift between lower-class and mainstream cultural ways because they are marginal to society, and are treated as less than full members of it. The policy implications of all 3 positions are extrapolated. The adaptive drift model is viewed as most clearly related to policies aimed at reducing inequalities by guaranteeing basic rights to the market, to governmental services, and to the control of institutions. (TL)

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THE LOWER CLASS AND THE FUTURE OF INEQUALITY

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THE LOWER CLASS AND THE FUTURE OF INEQUALITY

It is a recurrent problem in social science to seek to measure and evaluate the degree to which the poor are different from the rich, and to explain why this may be so. Despite Jenny's contention in The Threepenny Opera that "First comes the belly, then come the morals," social scientists in the 1960's tended to approach the study of the poor with the hypothesis of a "culture of poverty" as the dominant point of reference. It is our intention in this paper to review this literature from the thematic perspective of these meetings, and to contend that social scientists have advanced their research in this field sufficiently to support four major contentions.

These contentions are:

First, that neither of the two most common perspectives adopted regarding the lower class and its culture has proven to be empirically accurate or theoretically useful.

Second, that most recent evidence points to a third perspective as most adequate in dealing with the problem.

Third, that while further research on the problem may be useful, sociologists have at present enough evidence bearing on the problem to assert with confidence the theoretical and empirical superiority of the third position.

Fourth, that the policy implications of the three positions differ dramatically, the third being most clearly related to the reduction of inequality.

None of these points is original with us, but we think they ought to be

stated forcefully, for they seem to us to reflect genuine advances in social science over the past decade. Despite recent criticism of the appropriateness of social scientists' studying the behavior of the poor,[1] we feel that the answer does not lie in denying the legitimacy of such research, but rather in coming to grips with the broader implications of the empirical evidence now available and its relevance for social policy.

1. NEITHER OF THE TWO MOST COMMON PERSPECTIVES REGARDING LOWER-CLASS BEHAVIOR IS EMPIRICALLY ACCURATE.

The two positions we take to be those most commonly adopted regarding the orientation of the lower class are those of the "culture of poverty" and the "blocked opportunity" or"situational" hypothesis. A brief identification of each position, as well as substantiation of the contention that sociologists are loath to go beyond posing this question, may be provided by a few quotes from a new and lavish sociological textbook put together by the work of half-a-hundred eminent sociologists.

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[1]At a conference held on the topic of the "culture of poverty" at Temple University in 1969, a number of speakers from the floor expressed the position that the topic should not be discussed, owing to its political implications. A more measured statement expressing some of these fears was made by Frederick D. Halliday at that time: "There is always danger in the kind of thing we are doing today. If we prove that a culture of poverty exists today in spite of governmental efforts to raise living standards for all, some officials may question efforts to erase poverty. Or, conversely, suppose additional poverty might be created to force blacks and other poor to abandon a culture of poverty that is said to include having babies, wasting money, and living for the moment. Politically, sentiments toward blacks can take the form held in bygone days. The liberality of sociologists now being heard can be stifled. The academic teasing we engage in today may be interpreted by those politicians in power in such a way as to be used against people we are intending to help. This is the danger of not dissecting in all possible ways every assumption that has social consequences. The culture of poverty, <u>because it has political as well as social consequences</u>, must be set aside as a valid means of explaining our society (Winter, 1971:52-53, emphasis ours)."

> Although virtually all sociologists agree that the behaviors of different classes have both cultural and situational sources, there is considerable disagreement on the relative importance of the two. Many emphasize the cultural sources and speak of "social class subcultures" or of a "culture of poverty." The latter is believed to be a way of life guided by values transmitted from one generation to another, a collective adaptation of the poor to their adverse conditions. . . . Other observers believe that the behaviors attributed to the culture of poverty are actually individual responses to the conditions of economic deprivation and social dishonor. According to this point of view, the values of the poor are basically the same as those of higher strata; however, because of situational restrictions, they do not result in the same overt behaviors (CRM Books, 1971b:228).

The authors then outline how each perspective interprets lower-class family life, noting the importance of the differences in policy implied by each view:

> If the situational view is correct, once the social environment of the poor is changed, their behavior will quickly come to resemble that of the solid middle classes. . . . If, however, there is a culture of poverty, many of the poor will not respond readily or at all to increased opportunities and other situational changes. Rather, the values of the poor that are maladaptive in the long run will have to be extinguished, or the society's guardians will have to accept the fact that American middle-class values are perhaps, after all, not the highest point of moral evolution, that other values may be equally suitable to those who hold them (CRM Books, 1971b:230).

Thus concludes the treatment of the problem by the new sociological encyclopedists.

Our first contention is that the question, thus framed, presents a false dilemma.[2] Neither of these two commonly-held perspectives on the problem is satisfactory. Despite the attractiveness of the culture of poverty hypothesis to some social scientists, and the widespread attention it received from its statement by Oscar Lewis, very little empirical evidence has lent it support.

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[2]We hope we are able to heed Homans' warning (1950:319) that to the classic peril of being impaled on the horns of a dilemma, we moderns should add (the peril of)"being split by a false dichotomy."

Rejection of the culture of poverty view, however, does not imply acceptance of the situational, blocked opportunity view, which has also proven, we believe, to be less than adequate.

The evidence regarding the culture of poverty is most clear, and comes from careful ethnographic studies as well as statistical studies of the behavior and attitudes of the poor. Foremost among the latter is Kriesberg's (1970) study of fatherless families among public housing recipients,which exhaustively searches for cultural differences between his sample of mothers in poverty and a largely near-poor sample of parents in whole families. Neither a homogeneous way of life nor the perpetuation of poverty-specific values can be found by Kriesberg. Rather, the poor and the near-poor evince similarly high levels of achievement aspirations for their children, behavioral encouragement of achievement and autonomy, housing aspirations, and desire to work. The samples differ mainly in the situational opportunity available to them for jobs, housing, and association with potential neighbors in the various communities in which the projects were located.

Similar conclusions emerge from the major ethnographic studies of black, lower-class communities--most notably those of Liebow, Hannerz, and Valentine. Liebow rejects the cultural view in favor of the situational hypothesis:

> We do not have to see the problem in terms of breaking into a puncture proof circle, of trying to change values, of disrupting the lines of communication between parent and child so that parents cannot make children in their own image, thereby transmitting their culture inexorably, ad infinitum. . . . Of much greater importance for the possibilities of change. . . is the fact. . . that the son goes out and independently experiences the same failures, in the same areas, and for much the same reasons as his father (1967:223).

Hannerz (1969) expands his analysis beyond the street corner, and discovers four

major forms of adaptation to ghetto life, among which the"mainstreamers" behave in a fashion which directly refutes almost every contention of the culture of poverty position. Valentine, in his ongoing research in Blackston, reports discovering a greater pattern of institutional participation than the culture of poverty theorist would expect (Cf. CRM Books, 1971a:ch.7).

Survey research among the poor has similarly lent little evidence to support the culture of poverty position. With an area probability sample of 1400 persons, Rokeach and Parker (1970:110-111) examined differences in the values held by the poor and the middle class. Differences in values did exist, but not in areas generally cited as evidence for a self-perpetuating poverty subculture. An exhaustive search of the literature led Rossi and Blum to conclude, similarly, that if one means by the culture of poverty something more than the fact that the poor are different on some behavioral indicators, and show higher rates of a wide variety of disabilities, "then the empirical evidence would not support such a view" (1968:44).

If the culture of poverty hypothesis must be rejected, what of the situational hypothesis? We contend that it too is inadequate, although it is evident that behavior is enormously influenced by the choices and opportunities that are presented in a variety of social situations (Cf. Cloward and Ohlin, 1964; Liebow; Hannerz; and Kriesberg). Indeed, as Hannerz argues, culture itself is situational. It is a basic part of the human condition to develop cultural patterns that facilitate adaptation to external situations, but the "blocked opportunity" hypothesis is incomplete for the lower class.

What we find inadequate in the situational hypothesis is the suggestion that the poor react mechanically to new opportunity structures, quickly shedding

past life-ways they developed when faced with the stark options of poverty. We know that the poor will alter their behavior when their options increase; but we doubt that their past experience will cease to play a role in their behavior. We recall Claude Brown's insight when he returned to Harlem and became involved in a fracas: "Damn, I thought I had grown out of all that sort of thing. I thought I had grown out of hitting anybody in the street. I thought I had grown out of putting the blame on somebody else. I guess I hadn't" (1965:387). Though evidence is slim in sociological studies, we think that it does point to the persistence of some past behavior patterns among those upwardly-mobile from the ranks of the lower class.[3] Our critique of the blocked opportunity position will be more fully developed in the next section, when it is compared with what we consider a superior position.

2. RECENT EVIDENCE POINTS TO A THIRD PERSPECTIVE, "ADAPTIVE DRIFT," AS MOST ADEQUATE IN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM.

That the poor, living in poverty, do not respond mechanically to opportunity structures, as Liebow suggested, is the basic revision of the "blocked opportunity' model suggested by Hannerz at the end of his ghetto study. In the lower-class milieu, Hannerz suggests, basic modes of behavior and outlook develop and become shared. They are learned from experience and maintained both by experience and by interaction idioms. These modes of behavior vary individual by individual,

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[3]Studies of social mobility have tended to focus on the antecedents of mobility, and not on behavioral responses to it. Further, the process of group mobility, as opposed to individual mobility, has been largely neglected in its study in the American context. Nonetheless, the work of Ellis and Lane (1967) indicates the marginal status of the upwardly-mobile individual.

mixing mainstream and ghetto-specific adaptations. The model is probabilistic, not rigidly deterministic. In Hannerz' words:

> Exposure thus gives practically every ghetto dweller opportunities to familiarize himself with a range of modes of behavior and combinations of modes of behavior, from mainstream-oriented to ghetto-specific ways. It is obvious, however, that man is not a mindless cultural automaton. . . . (A cultural) repertoire to some measure constitutes adaptive potential. . . . As far as the individual's evaluation of a mode of behavior is concerned, it is likely that the more often it occurs in his milieu, the greater will be his readiness to find it not only convenient but also morally appropriate (1969:185-187).

Current research by Charles Valentine appears to be confirming much of Hannerz' research, as well as Valentine's (1968:142) earlier contention that neither the cultural nor the situational view was adequate, and that a third model, involving a "heterogeneous sub-society with variable, adaptive sub-cultures" was required. Valentine's field research in the "Blackston" neighborhood of a large city has led to the preliminary finding that "the most significant cultural similarities and differences of Blackston are associated with ethnic identity or racial status and not with class lines that would indicate a "culture of poverty"[4] (CRM Books, 1971a:99). Further, Valentine is finding that only twenty per cent of his sample is characterized by female-headed households, and that the residents of Blackston are very much enmeshed in social structures beyond the family: churches, social clubs, and political organizations, as well as governmental organizations. Blackstonians are involved in ethnic, mainstream, and poverty-specific institutions:

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[4]It should be noted that this finding regarding the relationship between ethnicity and class directly counters Herbert Gans' findings in The Urban Villagers (1962:229). Valentine is paying especial attention to blacks, which may explain the different conclusion that he reaches.

> The majority of participation patterns are conditioned by the stark fact of people being poor. When occupations are limited and income is minimal for whatever reasons, people turn to the other available sources of sustenance: welfare, crime, poverty programs, and the peculiarly exploitative forms of credit and ownership open to the poor. At the same time, mainstream values of American culture are fully understood and receive such general allegiance that they are the main motivation for many highly popular activities. These range from home-based retailing of mass-consumption items to public education and cultural institutions open to the public, commercial offerings of the mass communication media, commercialized holidays, sports and fashions. . . . Search as they will, the anthropologists have yet to find anything in all this dictated by a "culture of poverty" (CRM Books, 1971a:103).

The simultaneous possession of middle-class organizational capacities and lower-class expressiveness also characterized the welfare rights activists studied by one of the present authors (J. Van Til, 1970). The recipients' group studied advanced its interests with great skill, while serving also as an arena for story-telling, bickering, and other behavior that might be predicted by the culture of poverty hypothesis.

This apparent "biculturalism" of the poor has been noted most clearly by Rodman and Rainwater, and suggests to us Matza's (1964) concept of "drift". To be sure, as Rodman and Rainwater have both noted, these ideas are not identical.[5] Rodman, in suggesting the concept of the "value-stretch" as descriptive of the sort of behavior Hannerz and Van Til found, and Valentine is finding,

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[5]We do not read Matza to be saying that the mainstream values have a necessarily stronger hold on the individual than do subcultural values. We believe that this interpretation rests on our greater reliance on his theory in Delinquency and Drift (1964), whereas Rodman (1968) pays greater attention to his essay with Sykes (1957). In his book, Matza notes that the "delinquent transiently exists in a limbo between convention and crime, responding in turn to the demands of each, flirting now with one, now the other, but postponing commitment, evading decision. Thus, he drifts between criminal and conventional action" (1964:28).

intends to convey that lower-class individuals have a wider range of values than middle-class individuals, "but also a lower degree of commitment to any of the values in the range. As a consequence, they are more open to the possibility of acts that are defined as delinquent by the official representatives of society" (1968:257). Rainwater, similarly, sees a distinctive pattern of lower-class behavior, both existential and evaluative, which "consists of elements that are shared with the larger culture and ones that are peculiar to the group--it is the configuration of both kinds of elements that is distinctive to the lower class" (1968:247). Like Hannerz, Rainwater does not want the concept of lower-class culture totally to be abandoned. A lower-class culture exists as a reality for most of the poor, together with a core culture. The contribution of the concept of "adaptive drift," we believe, lies in its suggestion of the openness of the behavior of the poor, who are seen to apply cultural repertories differentially to situations as they themselves define them.

This is what Rainwater (1968:246) has called the "limited functional autonomy" of an adaptive lower-class culture. It is also quite close, we believe, to Valentine's "heterogeneous subsociety with a variable, adaptive subculture." Rainwater has described this model persuasively:

> Lower class subculture, then, can be regarded as the historical creation of persons who are disinherited by their society, persons who have adapted to the twin realities of disinheritance and limited functional autonomy for their group by developing existential perspectives on social reality (including the norms and practices of the larger society) that allow them to stay alive and not lose their minds, that allow them some modicum of hope about a reasonably gratifying life, and that preserve for many the slim hope that somehow they may be able to find admittance for themselves and their children to the larger society. In line with these existential perspectives, lower-class culture has developed as the repository of a set of survival techniques for functioning in the world of the disinherited (1968:247).

The concept of "adaptive drift" provides a perspective on lower-class behavior that indicates its situational variability and the retention of learned cultural modes during situational change, predicting a variety of personal and group adaptations in times of increasing affluence. It suggests that in static poverty, the poor are bi-cultural, and that in times of change, they retain this characteristic, developing new subcultural forms from their unique experience, much as Stonequist (1937) suggested characterized the experience of the "marginal man." Thus a tension is established between the self-definition of the lower class, and the definition of their behavior applied by the "moral entrepreneurs" of a predominantly middle-class society. The poor are "signified," but they also participate in their own self-definition.

This marginal status of the poor is clearly demonstrated by examining their dealings with the primary institutions of society outside the family, those institutions which affect the critical functioning of the family in modern industrial societies: political, economic, welfare, and educational institutions (Cf. Guttentag, 1970). These structures both provide the poor with mainstream values and limit them to opportunity structures that do not permit the realization of those values. Further, this gap is recognized by the creation of mainstream definitions that characterize the poor as lazy, undeserving, or subhuman. The poor react to this situation by seeking to adjust to the "double bind" in which they find themselves--proven inadequate by the opportunity denied them to achieve mainstraam values, confirmed as inadequate by their "signification" as shiftless and undeserving. Thus, it is the interaction of their marginal opportunity with their uneven treatment that leads them to create self-images that are necessarily variable with situational opportunity, and the definition of that situation by their peers. They learn the mainstream

values, but at the same time learn to be distrustful and cynical, developing alternative values to deal with their marginal status. They remain ever ready to shift their definition of a situation, ever adapting to a world that proves itself mercurial, inconsistent, and usually intractable to purposes they set for themselves.

Thus, as the situational model contends, the behavior of the poor is fettered and constrained by the limited nature of their opportunities. And, as the culture of poverty hypothesis contends, the poor do develop and adopt values and norms particular to their situation. But, as the culture of poverty model does not permit, the evidence is more than clear that the poor possess in their behavioral repertories many mainstream values and normative orientations. And, as the situational model does not recognize, they also develop modes of evaluating reality that cannot be expected to disappear when opportunities change.

Thus, we suggest that there is little reason to believe that, should inequalities be reduced, the ex-poor will behave just as the present middle masses do, or will. Indeed, the Indian experience with the freeing of caste restrictions suggests that "the coming into existence of new opportunities, educational, economic, and political, brought about an increase in horizontal solidarity. . . . In traditional India, fission seems to have been the dominant process, whereas today the trend has been reversed and fusion has replaced fission. And as Beteille has pointed out, fusion does not take place arbitrarily but takes into account traditional alignments" (Srnivas, 1968:114-115).

3. WHILE FURTHER RESEARCH ON THIS PROBLEM MAY BE USEFUL, SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE POINTS TO THE SUPERIORITY OF THE "ADAPTIVE DRIFT" HYPOTHESIS TO JUSTIFY ITS ACCEPTANCE AS THE BEST POSITION AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME, AND SOCIOLOGISTS SHOULD FEEL JUSTIFIED IN ASSERTING THE PROPOSITION AND ACTING UPON IT.

We believe that this conclusion is warranted for three reasons that flow from our argument: first, the adaptive drift model best fits the actual behavior of the poor; second, it provides social scientists with the most complete theoretical model by which this behavior can be explained; and third, it rests most clearly on the assumption that the poor share a common humanity with the rest of us, and are not the deviants conventional wisdom often makes them out to be. Additionally, we happily note that the policy conclusions which flow from the adaptive drift model are the ones most compatible with the reducing of inequalities in modern society, which leads us to our fourth proposition.

4. THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE THREE POSITIONS DIFFER DRAMATICALLY, THE ADAPTIVE DRIFT MODEL BEING THE MOST CLEARLY RELATED TO POLICIES AIMED AT REDUCING INEQUALITIES.

As Rossi and Blum have noted, the differences between the subcultural and situational models are only minor as far as empirical description is concerned, but are major in their policy implications (1968:57). Similarly, the differences between these two models and that of adaptive drift are most dramatic in the arena of social policy. The culture of poverty hypothesis suggests social policies that redirect unproductive subcultural orientations toward mainstream modes, by education, indoctrination, casework, and ultimately through cultural change (Ryan, 1971:135ff.). For those not subject to such mazeway change, advocates of this policy, such as Edward Banfield (1970), suggest such innovative institutions as the poor house and hardship levels of income maintenance.

The blocked opportunity thesis suggests a more activist, humane, and liberal set of policies. Here the focus is moved from the individual and his defective subculture to the inadequacies of opportunity structures in society at large. The poor are seen to resemble the middle class in that they respond

to available opportunities. They differ from the middle class in that they have few such opportunities available upon which to capitalize. The policy that follows from this view involves the opening of opportunity structures to the poor, whose behavior will thereby be changed. Thus, policy planners subscribing to this theory argue for more education and jobs for the poor, and the elimination of discrimination. Many also argue that a minimum income standard must be assured so that the first step may be secured on the opportunity ladder. Overall, however, this is a position that calls for the establishment of equality of opportunity, a rather traditional American value.

The adaptive drift hypothesis does not suggest, as Valentine's "heterogeneous subsociety with variable, adaptive subcultures," a combination of the above two policies, but rather a far more radical policy of equality. Rainwater's (1968) analysis of the policy implications of lower class culture and adaptation approaches this radical policy of equality in his emphasis on a strategy of "income equalization." The adaptive drift model, however, goes beyond questions of income equalization alone; to eliminate marginality in society, equalization of status and power is also necessary. Attention must be directed towards the multidimensional nature of stratification and inequality, as Miller, Roby, Rein, and Gross (1967, 1970) have so cogently argued.

In its focus upon the creation of a situation of equality of opportunity, the blocked opportunity model fails to confront the basic nature of stratification in society. Indeed, the basic sociological model of stratification in modern industrial society, developed by Davis and Moore (1945), is justified on the basis of the value of achievement and the belief in equality of opportunity. A policy of equality of opportunity, however, may lead not to a more equal

society, but to a more rigid justification of present systems of stratification.[6] A society which achieves the ideal of equality of opportunity may still be plagued with inequalities stemming from differences in mental and physical capacities, as was so clearly argued in Michael Young's fantasy on The Rise of the Meritocracy. Indeed, if all but genetic differences were eliminated, there would be ample room for the creation of a marginal underclass. Research on differences in achievement on I.Q. tests, as biased as these tests are, show that the cultural components in these tests have never explained "as much as 50 percent of the inter-individual variance; while . . . no research has ever found that the genetic component explains less than 50 percent of the variance" (Eckland, 1967:178).

A society which bases its system of justice on equality of opportunity might thus justify the creation of a new marginal group with minimal resources, those with the ill luck to be born with less than average intelligence. Only those with average intelligence or more would be treated as full members with a contribution to make to their society.[7] Even if the underclass were granted a minimum income sufficient to satisfy basic needs, the problem of relative deprivation would persist for those at the bottom and may even be exascerbated for them.

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[6]Prominent sociologists, most notably Parsons (1970) and Lipset (1967:ch. 10) tend to confuse this question by treating "equality of opportunity" as equivalent to "equality," while implying only the former meaning.

[7]We are aware of the optimistic view that in a radically enriched environment genetic differences will diminish or disappear (Eckland, 1967:179). A society based upon the ideal of equality of opportunity, however, is very unlikely to produce such an environment, while a more equal society could possibly provide an environment in which the inequalities of nature are diminished.

The adaptive drift hypothesis avoids the exclusive focus of social policy upon the poor and their subculture, and also leads away from a dependence upon a policy of equality of opportunity. It contends, rather, that the behavior of the poor and their ability to drift between lower-class and mainstream cultural ways results from the fact that they are marginal to society, and are treated as less than full members of it. Their marginality takes a dual form: first, they are marginal in the market place, where they are unable to contribute sufficient "net marginal productivity" to make their labor worth buying at a decent wage; second, lacking claims to status or access to power in their society, they, like other minorities, are subject to "kadi justice" from a range of mainstream institutions, not limited only to the courts (Cf. Matza, 1964).

Because of their attachment to mainstream values, the poor confront political, economic, educational, and welfare institutions believing that they should receive basic rights and privileges from these institutions. They receive, instead, quite variable and unpredictable responses, often conditioned on the degree of "worthiness" which they are able to project. By standards of distributive justice, the poor receive both low and unpredictable quality services from these major institutions--either second class treatment, from schools and politics, or segregated, inferior treatment in the areas of employment, welfare, and health care. They become aware of the fact that society does not measure up to mainstream values of justice. The poor learn to deal in the several worlds they inhabit, but they also learn that they cannot count on justice across the board from any of them.

The appropriate remedy thus becomes the elimination of uneven justice, by the guarantee of basic rights to the market, to governmental services, and to

the control of institutions. Access to the market suggests strategies of redistribution of wealth and income. We suggest that no useful societal function is served when the president of a bankrupt and inefficient railroad company receives 250 times the income of a Mississippi welfare family. Indeed, we suggest that the incentives involved toward achievement in work, so crucial to the functional theory of stratification, could be preserved in a society where the richest he controls a disposable income no more than three times greater than the poorest he.

But income equalization is not enough; institutions must be made accountable so that they can no longer dispense unequal and unpredictable services. In the public sector, accountability necessitates changes in basic governing structures. Initially, this means community control in decentralized districts, together with broad-based sharing of financial responsibilities within the context of metropolitan government (Cf. Committee for Economic Development, 1970). We would further suggest the institutionalization of the ombudsman at appropriate points in governing structures.

Finally, it is not just the public sector that must be returned to effective and accountable democratic control, but the private sector as well. Corporations must be prevented from dictating the priorities of society, and from exercising arbitrary power over the lives of the individuals involved in them. Here, we suggest the appropriateness of proposals for workers' control of industry within the context of democratic national planning as the policy most likely to expand the realm of democracy and provide for the augmentation and preservation of equality (Cf. Bottomore, 1964; Dahl, 1970).

We believe, on the basis of the empirical evidence available and presented

in part here, that social scientists involved in studying the behavior of the poor should push beyond the now arid debate of culture of poverty vs. blocked opportunity towards the adaptive drift model. Furthermore, for social scientists who believe in the value of equality, the time is ripe for a more forceful presentation of this model, and for social policies aimed at reducing inequalities on the basis of this model. To be sure, the facts are not "all in," and they never will be in the short-run in which policy decisions are made. Hypothetically, a test of the culture of poverty hypothesis could be made by instituting the changes outlined above. After one or two generations, one could examine the behavior of descendents of the current poverty population for evidence of a culture of poverty.

Similarly, a test of the blocked opportunity model could be made, but the consequences, according to our model, would not be the elimination of poverty. We would predict, rather, a continuation of inequality under this experiment, with the new underclass, after a number of generations, composed primarily of those with mental and physical handicaps in the race for success.

Until these results are in, we think that there is sufficient evidence available for sociologists to assert and act upon the adaptive drift hypothesis. We suggest that the best prediction available about the behavior of the poor under conditions of increasing equality involves the expectation of a flourishing of diversity in adaptations to life-circumstances, many difficult to predict, as they will involve a blending of old bi-cultural patterns and new situational opportunities. We predict that an egalitarian society will usher in a time of pluralistic adaptation, where aspects of the old and new combine to form new social forms, and a heterogeneous social structure. Some persons will remain

trapped in old lifeways, but many more will create new social forms. The net effect will be the creation of an open and diverse society, which will provide choice for its citizens by facilitating their own self-determination. The model of adaptive drift, then, presages a future of cultural efflorescence, as well as the fulfillment of a feasible and ancient dream--that of social equality among men.

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